From the Assistant Commissioner…

Haze Camera

In May 2002, IDEM activated a camera on the roof of a 13 story building on the north side of Indianapolis to take pictures of the downtown skyline every fifteen minutes. The camera is part of a 6 state midwest network that will help the states and USEPA assess the effects of regional haze on visibility. The network is funded through a grant from U.S. EPA's Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking (EMPACT) program administered through the Lake Michigan Air Directors Consortium. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin each have at least one haze camera. Some, like Indiana's camera, are located in urban areas and others in rural areas such as Seney Wildlife Refuge in Michigan. Indiana's camera is perched on top of the *Cingular* building at Keystone at the Crossing, pointed to the south.

The camera is similar to a surveillance camera and takes a picture of the downtown area. It sends a snapshot of the horizon to a computer located inside the building. The computer loads the photo to a website, managed by LADCO, every 15 minutes. Computers at other ambient air monitoring stations in the downtown area are receiving information about pollutant levels and weather conditions at the same time. The monitors are measuring the levels of ozone, particulate matter and other pollutants. Once all links are fully operational, the haze camera computer will call the ambient monitoring stations, obtain the data, and send the data to the LADCO website every hour.

Although ambient pollution levels are not the *only* contributor to reduced visibility, simultaneously monitoring visibility, pollutant levels and weather conditions allows scientists an opportunity to compare local visibility to the level of pollution in the air. Other factors, such as humidity and precipitation are also considered.

In 1999, the U.S. EPA adopted regulations for reducing regional haze in the nation's pristine natural areas, such as national parks and wilderness areas. According to these regulations, U.S.EPA has determined that every state in the continental United States contributes in varying degrees, to reduced visibility in these areas, and must develop and implement plans to reduce the emissions that contribute to impaired visibility. Addressing visibility in wilderness areas will also have a positive effect on pollution levels and visibility in our state. Indiana's haze camera will provide IDEM an opportunity to document actual visibility status over a period of time, allowing the agency to assess the actual impacts of emission reduction efforts.

For more information or to view visibility from IDEM's haze camera, go to www.mwhazecam.net or www.in.gov.idem/air/amb/ambient/ambient.html and click on the "live midwest haze cam" link.